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ABSTRACT

This guide was designed to help teenagers become involved in fun, alcohol-free activities. It provides youth with ideas on how to influence and change the factors that encourage teenage drinking. The guide has four purposes: (1) raise public awareness of the underage drinking crisis; (2) change community norms that encourage underage drinking; (3) create community-specific prevention messages and materials; and (4) ensure that special events in a community encourage healthy lifestyle choices. These purposes are addressed in seven sections in the guide. First, an overview of the problem describes alcohol's effects and the problems it causes. The next section shows how teenagers can learn more about the problem and how they can mobilize other youth in combatting alcohol abuse. Some of the strategies outlined here include raising public awareness through the news media and youth enforcement strategies such as vendor education, keg identification, and alcohol-free zones. Other prevention activities that are recommended are alcohol-free social gatherings, poster contests, interacting with peer advisors, and having a speaker's bureau. Contains a listing of resource organizations. (RJM)

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Teen Action Guide

Teen Drinking Prevention Program

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ALCOHOL

Introduction

This *Teen Action Guide* is designed to help you become involved in activities that show that you do not have to have alcohol to have fun—or a beer in your hand to be part of the group. It will provide you with ideas on how to influence and change the factors that encourage youth drinking.

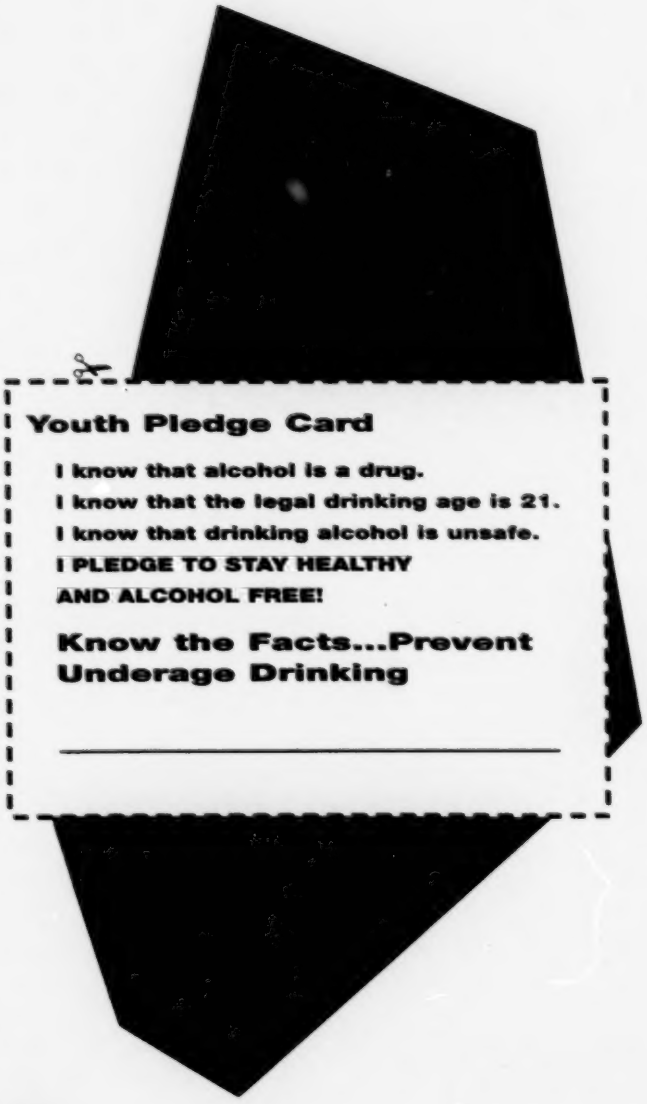
Using this guide can help your community become part of the CSAP Teen Drinking Prevention Program. This program has four purposes:

- Raising public awareness of the underage drinking crisis.
- Changing community norms that encourage underage drinking.
- Creating community-specific prevention messages and materials.
- Ensuring that special events in a community encourage healthy lifestyle choices.

Becoming involved in underage drinking prevention can help you save the lives of your friends and family.

Youth Pledge Card

Cut out and sign this Youth Pledge Card and keep it with you. Give one to a friend and talk to your friend about how to prevent underage drinking.



Youth Pledge Card

I know that alcohol is a drug.
I know that the legal drinking age is 21.
I know that drinking alcohol is unsafe.
I PLEDGE TO STAY HEALTHY AND ALCOHOL FREE!

Know the Facts...Prevent Underage Drinking

_____

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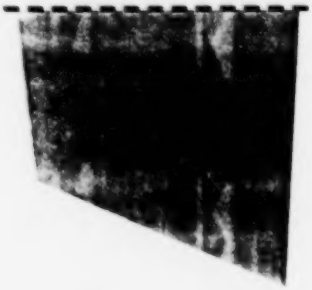
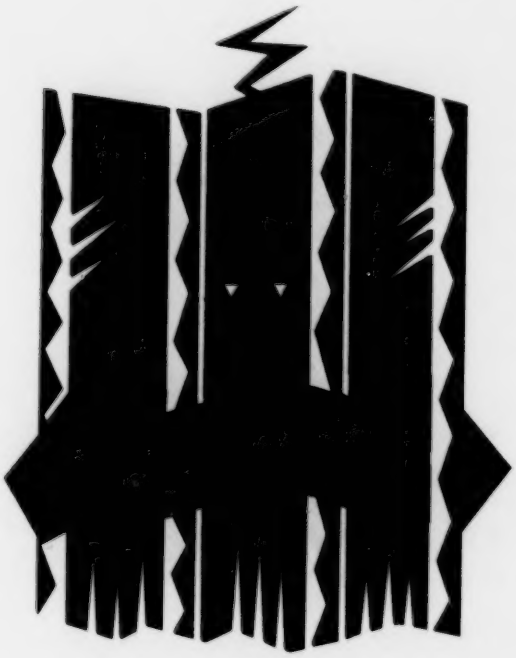


Overview of the Problem

Many teens who have used alcohol have paid the consequences: arrests, highway crashes, DWIs, health problems, and poor school work performance. You probably know friends and other students who have had such problems.

This happens because alcohol blocks the messages going to your brain and alters your perceptions, emotions, vision, hearing, and coordination. To make matters worse, recent Federal studies found that two out of three students could not distinguish alcoholic beverages from nonalcoholic beverages based on their labeling and packaging.

Nearly 40 percent of the young people in adult correctional facilities reported drinking before committing the crime.



Many youth do not know much about the beer, wine, and distilled spirits they consume. Your friends may be among those who do not know. But they need to know. Even if you do not feel comfortable telling them what to do, you will want them to know the consequences of drinking.

Alcohol use can lead to the following:

- Being victimized or arrested—Crime is a major result of underage drinking. Nearly 40 percent of the young people in adult correctional facilities reported drinking before committing the crime that landed them there. Among college students, 55 percent of those committing crimes and 53 percent of crime victims were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the incident.

- Losing that license—In many States, youth under age 21 caught drinking or possessing alcohol have their driver's license delayed, suspended, or even revoked.

- Suffering injuries or death—The mix of alcohol and sporting or recreational activities can be deadly. Studies have found alcohol was involved in 69 percent of boat-related drownings.

Youth drinking also often leads to teen pregnancy, other drug use, and school failure. Many teenagers report using alcohol to handle stress or lighten their load. In reality, alcohol use can lead to consequences that would burden any young person's shoulders.

Getting Started

Have you ever felt that going out with friends on a Saturday night is hazardous to your health and to theirs?

Youth and alcohol are a dangerous combination. In fact, there is a virtual epidemic of drinking among your peers. And this underage drinking occurs across geographic, racial, and ethnic boundaries. It is a problem in all American communities. What can be done about it? A lasting solution requires that communities build broad networks of prevention partners. Young people must help themselves and each other and be not only part of, but leaders in, prevention efforts.

The Mixed Signals of Mixed Messages

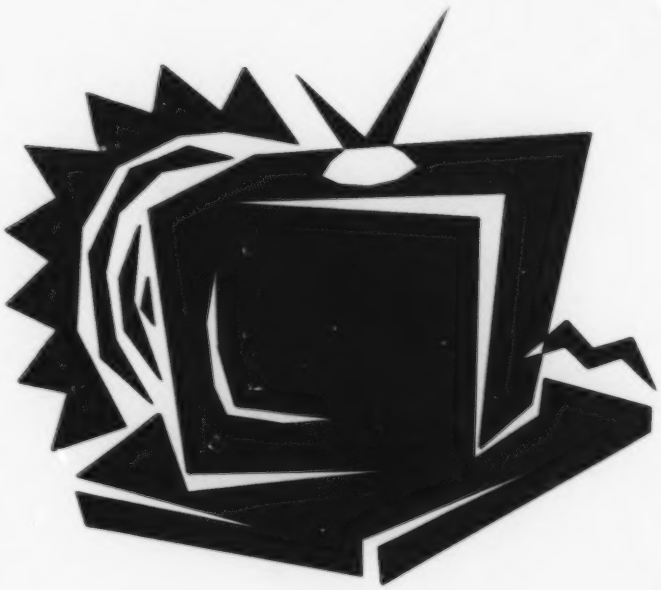
The environment in which we live, grow, and work affects each of us. All communities have norms, or standard behaviors, which are those actions we expect of others and copy ourselves. This "copied behavior" is especially true of young people, as you search for your own identity and struggle to fit in.

The media plays a persuasive role in each of our lives. Its reach is wide and powerful. The commercials that we see on TV and the actions of TV and movie stars are all part of the environment that influences the choices you and your friends make. Too often media messages are mixed messages.

It's important to understand the role of the environment in underage drinking and the strong influence that community norms have on all our behavior.

Many factors and influences have an impact on a young person's decision to drink or not drink. The strongest influences are the attitudes and actions of a young person's friends and peers and the environment in which he or she lives. That is precisely why it makes so much sense for youth to be part of the organization and leadership of a community's teen drinking prevention program.

Although the statistics about the number of young people who drink are alarming, some good news can also be found in the numbers. Nationwide there are approximately 20 million junior and senior high school students. A recent series of reports on alcohol and youth, conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, found that of these 20 million students, half (10.6 million) drink monthly. At the same time, the other half (10.1 million) do not.



Of 20 million junior and senior high school students in the country, half drink monthly, according to a Federal report. That means that 10 million youth do not drink monthly!

Friends and peers can be an important source of information and socialization. The attitudes and actions of other youth and family have a strong influence on your decisions, including the decision to use or not use alcohol.

Your influence with your peers makes you, the youth leader, a critical component of the alcohol use prevention strategies for youth in your community. The challenge before you and your community is to harness the power of others who already understand that alcohol robs young people of their present and their future and to communicate this health and safety message to others.

Mobilizing Other Youth

Mobilization is what happens when a group of people organize and become ready for action. Throughout the process, they equip themselves with information about targeted issues and how those issues affect their community. Action happens because one or more persons in a community see a need. To solve the underage drinking crisis, it is essential for youth to take action.

Below is a list of six steps and suggested activities that will help you get other youth involved to prevent underage drinking.

Step One–Learn and Know the Facts

- Go to the library.
- Visit your local health department. Ask questions and pick up information.
- Ask your parents, grandparents, other family members, principals, doctors, and teachers for information.
- Talk to law enforcement officials and clergy.
- Identify groups in the community that address underage drinking issues.
- Review newspaper articles and watch health-related programs on TV and videos on underage drinking.
- Talk to other youth.

Step Two–Share and Expand Your Knowledge

- Make sure your group members know the facts about underage drinking in your community.
- Ask group members to present what they have learned through creative activities such as a rap, flier, song, dramatization, skit, dance, art work, photography display, mock interview, etc.

- Set up discussion sessions so group members can talk to youth who have been involved in alcohol-related crashes.
- Take the time to think of other activities that will help you to better know your community and address youth drinking.

Step Three–Put the Word Out

- Tell a friend and have him or her tell a friend that this group is meeting (always do this).
- Create a flier about the group and pass it out at school (during classes, homeroom, sports practice), recreational facilities, other group meetings, dances, church, and elsewhere.
- Ask your parents, family members, and teachers if they know of other parents, coaches, city council members, teachers, principals, pastors, the mayor, and others who could help your group's efforts.
- Conduct a survey in your community on underage drinking. (See the Teen Drinking Prevention Program's *Community Risk Assessment Guide*.)
- Develop a presentation about your group and present it to school groups, youth groups, community organizations, during school assemblies, and so on.

Step Four–Create the Action Plan

- Determine the group's role in addressing underage drinking in the community.
- Set up regular meeting times and days.
- Discuss and write out your overall mission.
- Outline overall goals and strategies.
- Identify group leaders and committees.
- Decide what makes your group special.
- Plan alcohol-free activities.

- Determine a way for group members to make alcohol-free pledges.
- In developing your plan, make sure you review the plans of other groups addressing underage drinking.
- Review and complete the attached Action Plan.

Step Five–Carry Out the Action Plan

- Determine ways to address any problems that may come up in the group.
- Make sure regular meetings take place.
- Continue to include others in your group.
- Keep conducting underage drinking surveys.
- Get commitments from other individuals and organizations in the community to help you implement your Action Plan.

Step Six–Assess the Plan and Make Changes as Needed

- Evaluate the group Action Plan and determine if anything needs to be changed.
- Modify leadership as needed.
- Modify activities as needed.
- Recognize the accomplishments of group members.
- Celebrate your successes and report them to other groups, newspapers, radio and TV stations, churches, and so on.

These steps should help you get started in mobilizing the youth in your community to prevent underage drinking. Whenever your group is able to gain additional knowledge or training that will benefit the group's growth, be sure to take advantage of the opportunity.

Remember this is only a beginning. The list of resources at the end of this booklet may help you go even further.

Action Plan

Mission statement:

_____

_____

_____

Goals:

_____

_____

_____

Strategies:

_____

_____

_____

Tasks:

_____

_____

_____

Person(s) responsible for tasks:

_____

_____

Due date of tasks:

_____

Sharing Successes

People and groups we should inform:

_____

What they need to know:

_____

Communication methods we should use:

_____

_____

Assessing Our Action Plan and Making Changes

When will we assess our Action Plan?

_____

How will we collect feedback to assess our Action Plan?

_____

How will we use the feedback to make changes?

_____

When will we make the needed changes?

_____

Raising Public Awareness Through the News Media

Make all residents of your community aware of the seriousness of the underage drinking problem, as well as other youth. This will be your first step in motivating them to take action to solve the problem.

The news media can deliver a message to vast numbers of people within a community and can be a critical working partner in your prevention efforts. However, the information you present to the news media must be timely and significant; in other words, newsworthy.

- Announce the creation of your group and its subsequent activities to the news media. Your participation in a teen drinking prevention program is news in itself.

- Initiate stories when the local town council, county board of supervisors, or the State legislature is considering a bill that relates to underage drinking; relate the program or campaign goal to a recent drinking or drinking and driving tragedy that has taken place in the community. Or, connect an upcoming holiday with the predictable rise in alcohol-related auto crashes.

- Localize the issue. Relate a national policy, an initiative, or statistics to what's happening in your community. Quote local elected or community leaders. Relate human interest stories (unfortunately, they are often human tragedies) involving local residents.

Communicating With Reporters and Editors

The press release is the most common method of communicating with reporters and editors. However, large media operations receive hundreds of press releases every day. To ensure that yours is read, you must use the style and format the media prefers.

The following rules will help you write effective press releases:

- Begin with the most important facts. The first paragraph (called the lead) should present the who, what, when, where, why, and how. In other words, get to the point immediately. Then write the rest of the release. Most releases are between four and six paragraphs and are certainly no longer than two pages.

- Accuracy is critical. Check your facts and make sure that names, dates, titles, etc., are correct.

- Be brief. Use short sentences and paragraphs.

- Write factually and objectively—avoid editorializing and overusing adjectives.

- The local angle is your strongest selling point with local media. Be sure to quote local officials—the principal of your school, clergy of your church, and the like—and include local examples and initiatives.

Other ways to communicate with journalists include pitch letters—letters that introduce an organization or topic to the reporter—and phone calls.

A word about making phone calls to reporters: News reporters are extremely busy people, especially when working against a tight deadline, but you may be able to interest them in your story by phone. Collect your facts before you call and, again, get to the point quickly. It is often wise to learn a reporter's deadline—usually the late afternoon—and avoid calling at that hour.

Preparing for the Role of the Media Spokesperson

Every organization has a person or persons designated to speak to the news media. This role may sound intimidating, but it does not have to be. The secret to successfully representing your organization or issue to the news media is preparation. Simply give some thought to what you want those who read or hear the news story to learn about the teen drinking problem and how you want to say it.

Media outlets and media markets come in all shapes and sizes. We all know of the traditional daily newspapers and evening news programs, but there are numerous other media outlets that may be helpful to your local campaign. In building your media list do not overlook the following:

- Weekly newspapers
- Free newspapers
- Supplements to major metropolitan newspapers, including Sunday magazines, calendar sections, suburban editions, and such
- TV public affairs programming and talk shows
- Cable TV news and public affairs programming
- Cable TV "Community Bulletin Boards"
- Radio stations, especially all-news format stations

Student-run media, such as your high school's news-paper, radio station, or even the schoolwide morning announcements, are very important avenues of communication available to you!

Youth Enforcement Strategies

All 50 States have a minimum drinking age of 21, but many young people under that age buy alcohol every day. Beer is sometimes cheaper than soda; wine coolers are marketed as if they were soft drinks. You and your peers can buy alcohol at the store, drink at home, or drink with friends at parties. The problem is real. What part can a youth leader play in the solution? A big one.

By using the techniques you've already learned for mobilizing your peers, your newly created organization can be a key player in helping to support the underage drinking laws in your community.

Step One—Be Informed—Know the Facts

- Learn the laws for your community and your State on the distribution, sale, and regulation of alcoholic beverages.
- What loopholes exist in these laws? Are the laws truly enforced?
- Find out what local authorities (Alcohol Beverage Control [ABC] board, police department, and the like) are doing to enforce the minimum drinking age of 21.

Step Two—Plan

- Make your enforcement concerns and strategies a priority.
- Select one issue or strategy to target. Step three lists some examples.

Step Three—Take Action

- Support some of the following enforcement strategies:

Sting operations—These can be very useful in cracking down on stores that sell to underage youth. Teenagers, in cooperation with their local law enforcement team, attempt to buy alcohol at different outlets. If the establishment sells the alcohol, it can be charged. Keep in mind that the media will be instrumental in increasing the impact of stings by publicizing them.

Keg ID—In an effort to discourage the purchase of kegs for youth parties, when a keg is sold it is tagged with an identification number so that the buyer can be identified in the event of a problem. So, when fliers show up at your high school about a keg party, take action and notify the police and your ABC board.

Vendor education—Most States require training of people who sell or serve alcohol. You know the establishments and servers who sell to youth; hold them accountable for their actions.

The local ABC board—Again, you know the establishments in your community that serve and sell to young people. Provide this information to your local ABC board.

Messages about alcohol geared toward youth—Contact your local radio and television stations and billboard companies to request equal air time and advertising space for promoting pro-health and alcohol use prevention messages to young people.

■ Support some of the following enforcement tools that your community can legislate:

Zero blood alcohol content levels—Collect signatures in your community to support measures to pass a blood alcohol level of 0.02 or less, which would make even the smallest blood alcohol level in a person driving a car illegal.

Administrative license revocation—In some States any driver arrested for driving under the influence loses his or her license at the first court hearing if he or she is under 21, refuses to take a blood alcohol test, or has been previously convicted of driving under the influence.

Alcohol-free zones—These zones make areas around schools and youth centers free from alcohol advertisements and stores that sell alcohol.

Decrease in the availability of alcohol—New laws could mandate that alcohol not be sold in convenience stores, gas stations, and drive-throughs.

Youth Prevention Activities

Here are some prevention activities that young people have successfully organized in communities across the country. These are suggestions, a place for you to start. In truth, the choice of prevention activities is as wide as your creativity, event, or project planning skills.

- Work with teachers, student leaders, and school officials to develop schoolwide and classroom activities that educate your peers about alcohol and encourage healthy lifestyle choices.

- Talk to your friends about alcohol and other drugs. Encourage them to make healthy lifestyle choices.

- Plan school and social activities, such as dances, battles of the bands, potluck dinners, dance marathons, and Olympic-style games that are free of alcohol and other drugs.

- Write letters to your school and local community newspapers expressing your concern about underage drinking and your support of stricter enforcement of the law.

- Build a "no-use" message float for your school's homecoming parade.

- Work with or organize a "Friday Night Live" program in your city that offers alcohol-free activities to youths. (See Resources section for more information on this program.)

- Review your school's health, safety, and alcohol and other drug education programs and recommend possible improvements to school officials.

- Sponsor a rap contest for the best no-use of alcohol rap.

- Sponsor a poster contest for the best no-use poster.

- Organize a peer-to-peer assistance program and train the peer advisors. Peer advisors are friends who are there when friends

and other young people need information or just need to talk.

- Organize a ride-home program for students who rode somewhere with someone who now should not be driving.

- Sponsor a Safety Agreement Month during which teenagers, parents, family members, and friends sign pledges to make healthy lifestyle choices, including not using alcohol in the case of young people, wearing safety belts, not accepting rides from people who have been drinking, and wearing helmets when riding bicycles or motorcycles.

- Encourage Prom Night Pledges for an alcohol-free graduation and other celebrations.

- Create a speakers' bureau. Ask a number of youth leaders within your community to serve on your speakers' bureau and then solicit opportunities for them to go out into the community to speak to groups about the seriousness of the underage drinking problem. Such groups and forums might be churches, civic organizations, schools, recreation centers, and the like.

- Write a Bill of Rights for your school and students that includes freedom from the pressure to drink and the right to be educated about the mixed messages of alcohol consumption.

Resources

Alcohol and Drug Problems Association of North America
444 North Capitol Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 737-4340

American Bar Association Advisory Commission on Youth Alcohol and Drug Problems
1800 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 331-2290

American Youth Work Center (AYWC)
1751 N Street, NW
Suite 302
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 785-0764

Boys and Girls Clubs of America
771 First Avenue
New York, NY 10017
(212) 351-5900

Boy Scouts of America
1325 West Walnut Hill Lane
P.O. Box 152079
Irving, TX 75015-2079
(214) 580-2000

Camp Fire, Inc.
4601 Madison Avenue
Kansas City, MO 64112
(816) 756-1950

CWD International Communities Without Drugs Campuses Without Drugs
2530 Holly Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15235
(412) 731-8019

Friday Night Live Youth Prevention Services Section Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs
444 N. 3rd Street
Suite 310
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-7456

Girl Scouts of the USA
420 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10018
(212) 852-8000

"Just Say No" International
1777 N. California Boulevard
Suite 210
Walnut Creek, CA 94596
(800) 258-2766

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)
51 East John Carpenter Freeway
Suite 700
Irving, TX 75062-8187
(800) 438-6233

National Association for Children of Alcoholics
11426 Rockville Pike
Suite 100
Rockville, MD 20852
(301) 468-0985

National Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors
951 S. George Mason Drive
Arlington, VA 22204
(703) 920-4644

National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors
444 North Capitol Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 783-6868

National Association of Teen Institutes
8790 Manchester Road
St. Louis, MO 63144
(314) 962-3456

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)
Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20852
(800) 729-6686

National Collaboration for Youth (NCY)
1319 F Street, NW
Suite 601
Washington, DC 20004
(202) 347-2080

National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth Communications Center
1423 N. Jefferson Street
Springfield, MO 65802
(417) 836-3709

National 4-H Council
7100 Connecticut Avenue
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
(301) 961-2800

National PTA Drug and Alcohol Prevention Project
700 North Rush Street
Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 787-0977

Parent Resources Institute on Drug Education (PRIDE)
Suite 126
Woodruff Building
100 Edgewood Avenue, NE
Atlanta, GA 30303
(404) 651-2548

Schools Without Drugs
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202
(800) 624-0100

More Information

The CSAP Teen Drinking Prevention Program is designed to help local communities create prevention programs at the grassroots level. This booklet addresses the vital role that youth leaders can play in preventing underage drinking. Other products available from CSAP include how-to guides on building community networks, working with the news media, and modifying events within your community. These products are available from CSAP's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI).

For more information, contact:

NCADI
P.O. Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20852

(800) 729-6686
(301) 468-2600 (local calls)
(301) 468-6433 (Fax)
(800) 487-4889 (TDD)

Know The Facts.
Prevention WORKS!

Teen Drinking Prevention Program

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention